Archaeology & History in Lebanon Issue Seventeen : Spring 2003, p.7-16

Claude Doumet-Serhal

JARS FROM THE SECOND MILLENNIUM BC AT SIDON: CHILD BURIALS OR DEPOSITED GOODS IN GRAVES

In Sidon immediately above the Early Bronze Age level (see p. 2- 6) there was a layer of sterile sand. This sand varied in depth from 90 cm to 140 cm. It was extremely fine and was brought to the site from the nearby seashore. The 2001 season of excavation revealed 20 burials (Doumet-Serhal 2001, 162-171 & forthcoming in *Levant*) of the Middle Bronze Age (2000-1550 BC) dug into this sand (for a full discussion of the current debate on the beginning of the MB Age see Bagh 2000, 8-28).

These burials were divided into:

- Constructed graves either lined with stones or mud brick. In these graves the deceased is found buried in a supine or flexed position. Objects found in them included so-called luxury items, mainly metal artefacts, and jewellery.
- Simple graves dug into the sand with the body found in a flexed position.



- Jar burials. The earlier burials were discovered at the top of the sand layer. One jar (burial 11) was found under a cobbled area. Two jar burials (14 and 15) were found next to and partly under a retaining wall and aligned with it. Not all the vessels were preserved with their rims intact, which were usually removed to insert the body. A large fragment from another jar covered the opening.
- One grave revealed a multiple burial.

Several types of jars were in use in the second millennium at Sidon. These different types reflect a degree of regionalism in style rather then a chronological progress. Jars from the Early MB I/IIA were also found deposited in constructed graves.

VESSELS FOUND AS GOODS DEPOSITED IN THE GRAVE IN THE EARLY SECOND MILLENNIUM BC (MB I/1)

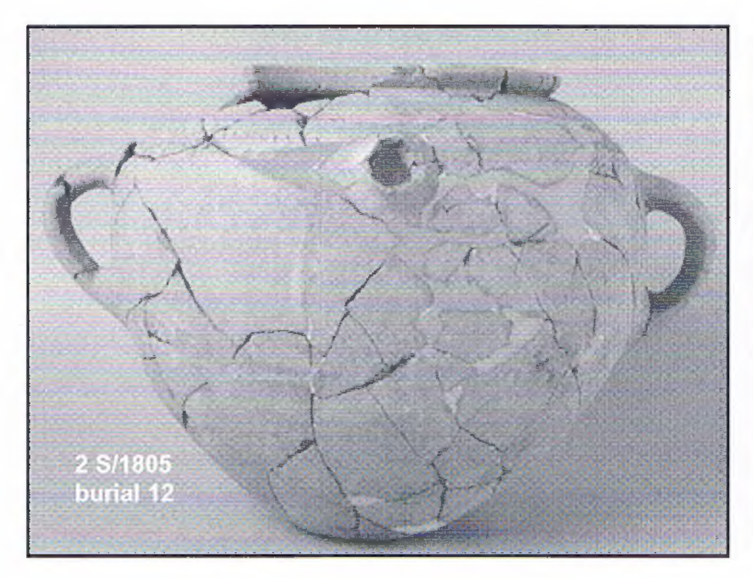
REPERTOIRE

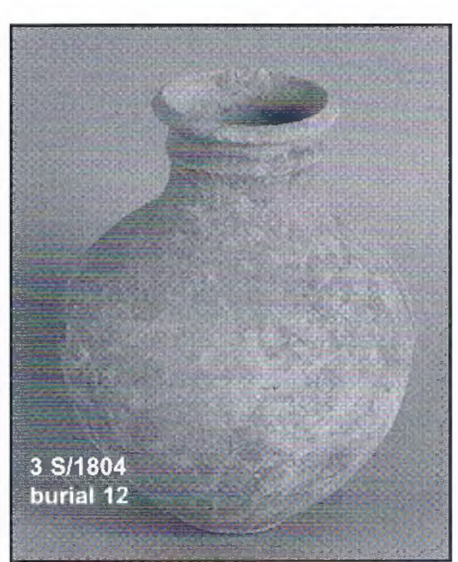
1

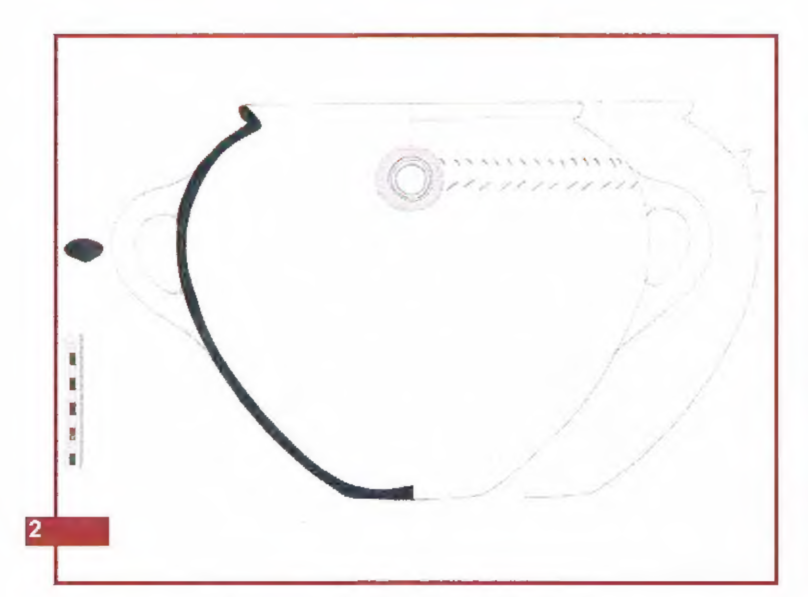
Burial 12 (fig. 1): the burial of a powerfully-built adult male (Ogden & Schutkowski 2003, forthcoming) lying in a supine position with his weapons, an axehead and a spearhead. Many vessels were found associated with this burial (Doumet-Serhal 2001 164-167; Doumet-Serhal forthcoming in *Levant*) among them, a spouted hole-mouth jar (fig. 2) containing the whole skeleton of a young goat (Vila forthcoming) and a handleless medium size storage jar with a ridge at mid-neck (fig. 3).

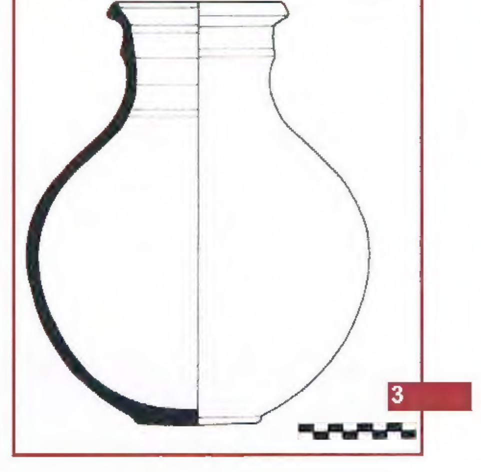
THE SPOUTED-HOLE-MOUTH JAR WITH HANDLES

(S/1805) (fig. 2) and a flat base used in grave 12 as a container for animal bones is reminiscent in style to those found in the Megiddo Group (Amiran, 1969, 81, 90, …The Megiddo Group is a link between MBI and MBIIA). Hole-mouth jars with a spout are found in an EB/MB context at Jericho, (Kenyon 1965, fig. 17, 15, 16, p. 41) and







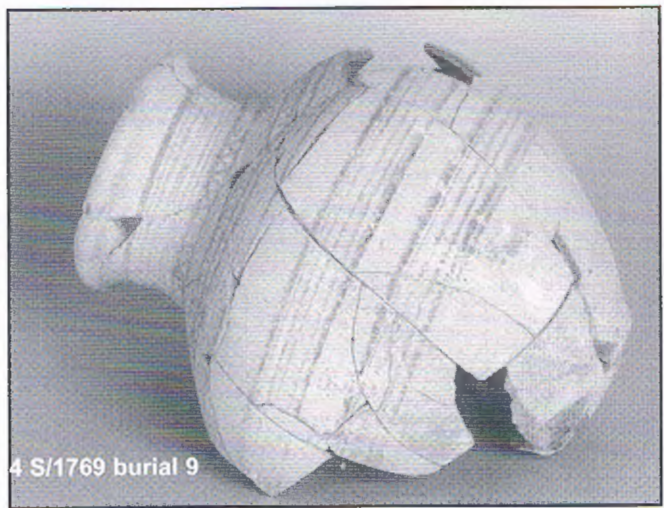


Iktanu, phase I, (K. Prag 1986, p. 61-72, fig. 4). Large "teapot" jars are typical of the MBI in upper Galilee, (Tadmor 1978, 7-8; also Richard 1980, 17-18). Our vessel, with its wide diameter and its flanged rim (Du Mesnil du Buisson 1930, 161-162, fig. 6, 1) has a single row of incisions at the base of the rim. Incisions used as a decoration are found in EBIV at Khirbet Iskander (Richard 2000, 409-410), Amman, (Helms 1989, 21), Jericho in EBIV, (Robinson 1995, 73-74); and in Syria in MBI, (Dunand, Saliby & Khirichian 1954-1955, 27, pl. III, 3, from Amrith, T 6). Amiran (1969, 80) points out that the Palestinian Northern group appears to prefer incisions made with a single point. Handles are unusual on this type of vessel.

THE HANDLELESS MEDIUM SIZE JAR WITH A RIDGE AT MID-NECK (30 cm high) (fig. 3).

The neck of this jar, with a ridge midway, is long and straight. The ridge appears on various Middle Bronze Age jars from Lebanon (Kamid el Loz, Hachmann 1969; pl. X, 1; XI, 2, 4) and Syria (Mishrife, tomb 1, MBIIA, Du Mesnil du Buisson 1927; 18, fig. 51; and 1930, pl. XXXII, 7; Nigro, 1997; 274, ...On the MB I pottery horizon of the Euphrates Valley: comparative and distinguishing features....... Jerablus Tahtani, A MB IA dating may in fact be suggested ... for a globular jar ... with a shallow ridge at the middle of the neck; 277, the ridge at the middle of the short neck is mentioned for a jar at Tell Mumbaqat). The simple thickened beveled rim is similar to those found in MBII A at Tel Aphek (Beck, 1975, fig. 3, 6 Pre-Palace phase) and Megiddo (Loud 1948, pl. 8, 4 str. XV, MB IIA).



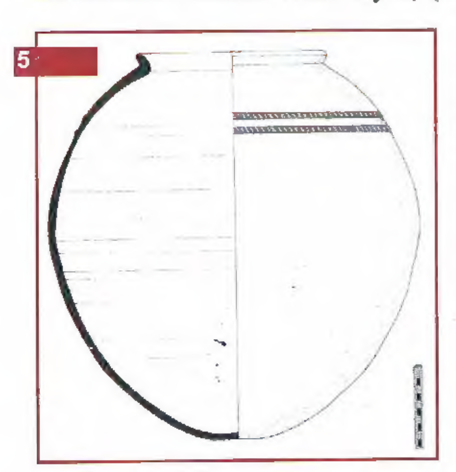






Burial 9:
A stone-lined grave containing the remains of a child of 3 to 4 years of age, (Ogden & Schutkowski forthcoming) along with a quantity of animal bones. These are mainly remains of sheep/goat, bovid, as well as remains of cuttlefish (Vila forthcoming).

- Another **MEDIUM-SIZED JAR** (27 cm high) (fig. 4) found in the corner of burial 9, is painted in Levantine Painted Ware style, (Tubb 1983; 49-62; Bagh 2000 a 29-46) the hallmark of the MBI/ MBIIA phase with bichrome horizontal bands extending onto the lower part of the vessel. Wavy lines at the intersection of neck and shoulder and on the shoulder are also present. The jar has a circular body and is widest at the shoulders. It has a slightly everted neck with a plain rounded rim forming a bulbous fold (Bagh 2000 a, 54-62). Comparable painted monochrome storage-jars with handles, smaller than the one in Sidon, are found in Palestine (Bagh 2000 a, 56-58) namely in Megiddo (Gerstenblith 1983, 23-28, (early MB I/ IIA). The same type of painted decoration is also found at Sidon on contemporary jugs and juglets.

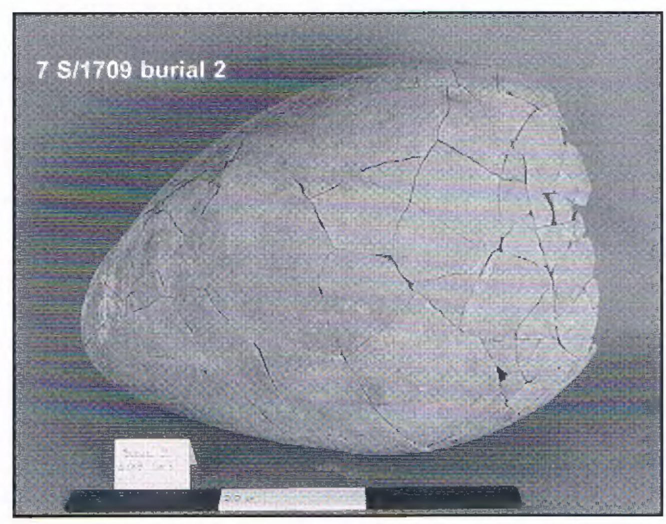


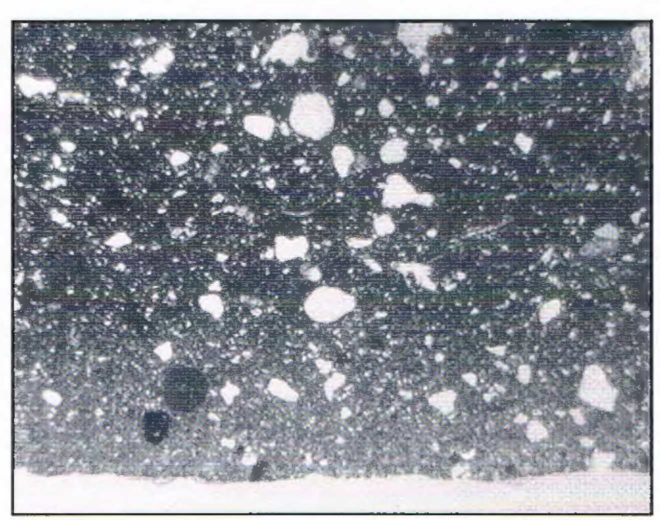
VESSELS USED AS CHILD AND INFANT BURIALS IN MB I/2 :

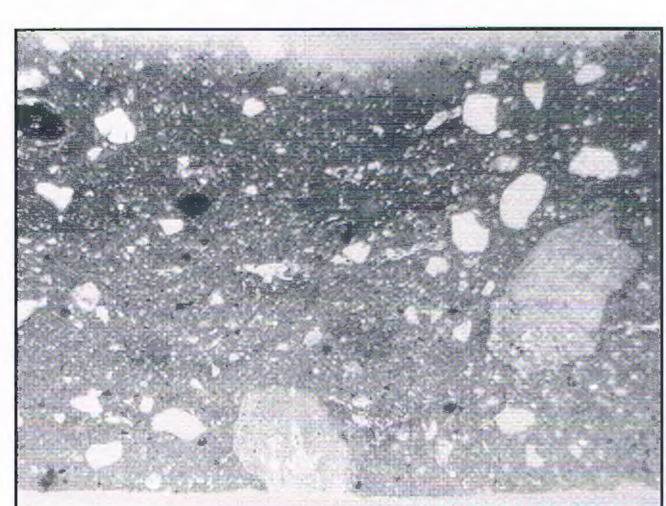
REPERTOIRE

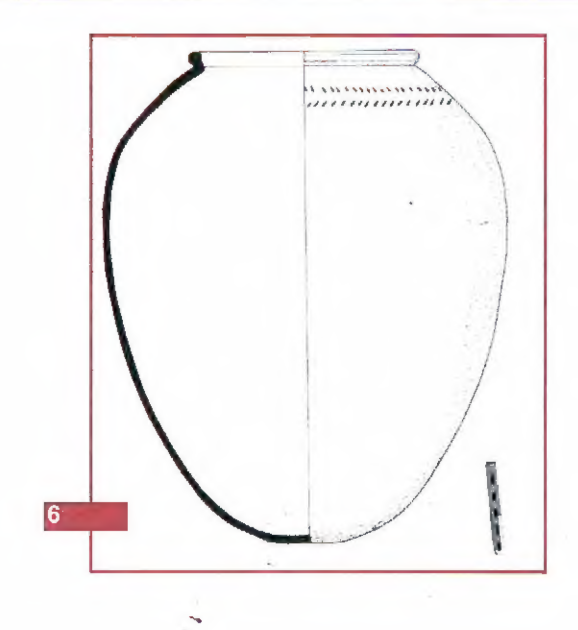
THE HOLE-MOUTH TYPE (FIG. 5-6). Most of the hole-mouth types belong to a class of globular (Du Mesnil du Buisson 1930, at Mishrife in tomb 1, MBI, pl. XXXII, 1, 2, 7; Nigro 1997, 272 on the Middle Bronze I horizon 2000-1800 BC of Northern inner Syria, ...Medium-size jars have an

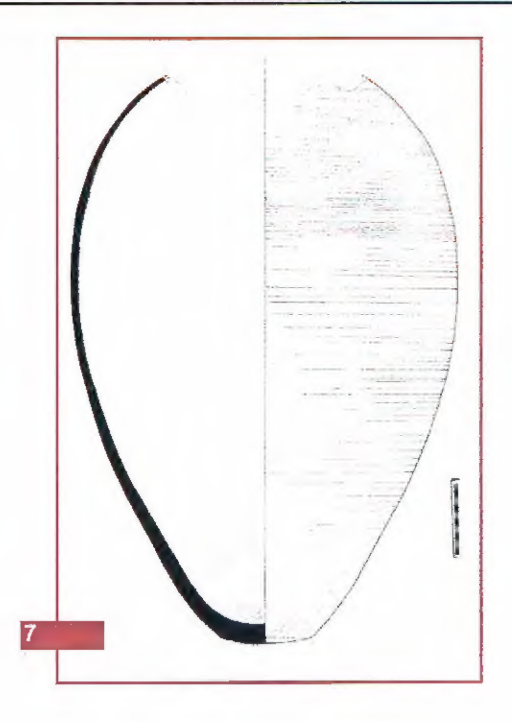

6 S/3055 burial 18


7 S/1709 burial 2

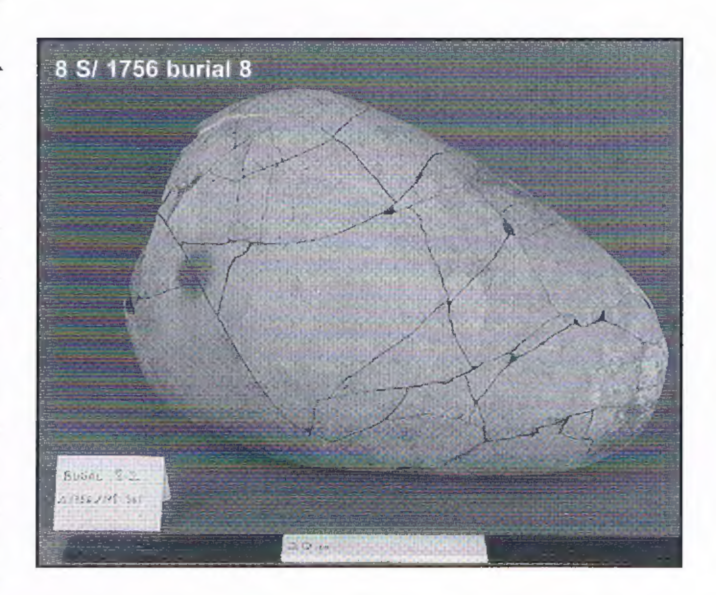


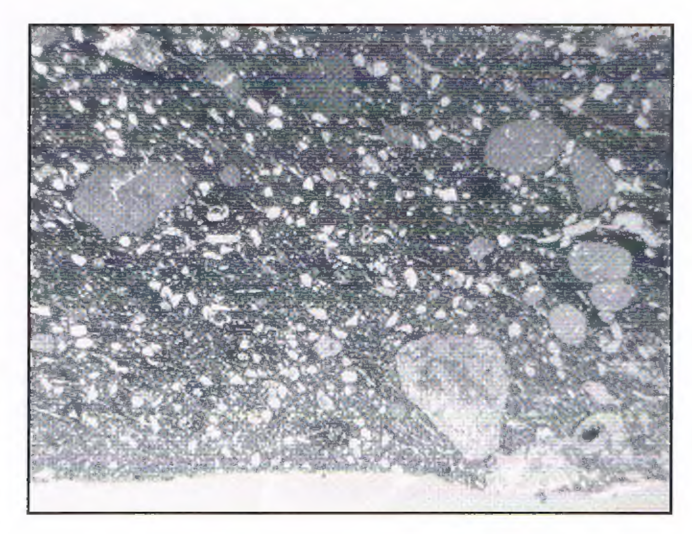



6


7

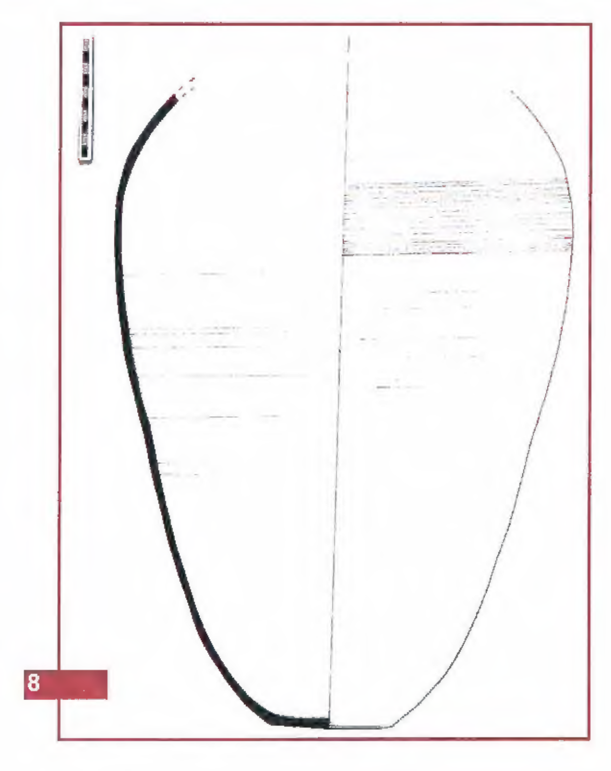
almost globular body...") or oval-shaped storage jars (S/1874-S/ 3055). The rims of this type of jar have several variations, namely simple flaring or thickened rims, all reminiscent of Sidon's Early Bronze Age. The base is almost but not quite round. They vary in height between 50 and 60 cm. These jars, similar to the Montet jar, (Montet 1929, pl. LX, 394; Tufnell & Ward 1966, 168-173) were manufactured in two stages with the body built up of coils and the upper part with the rim thrown on the wheel. The two parts were fitted together at the upper horizontal applied band of incised rope pattern relief or at the row of fingernail impressions. This type of decoration is very similar to the decoration on Early Bronze Age jars from Sidon (see also p. 38-41).

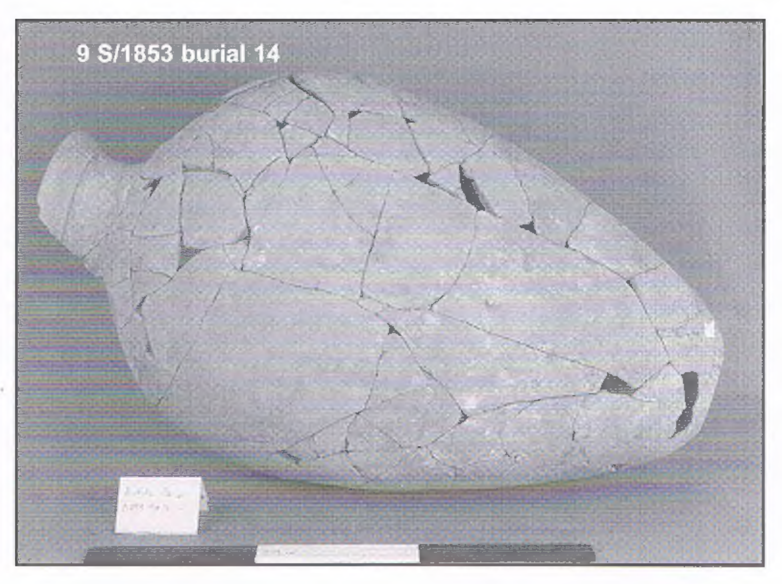


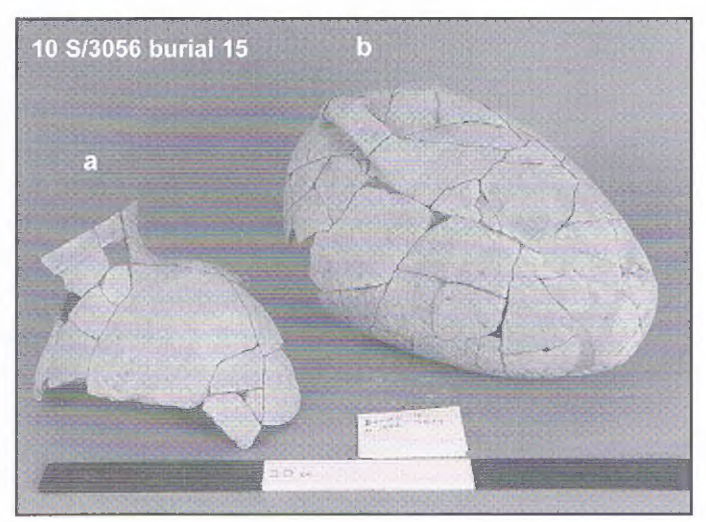


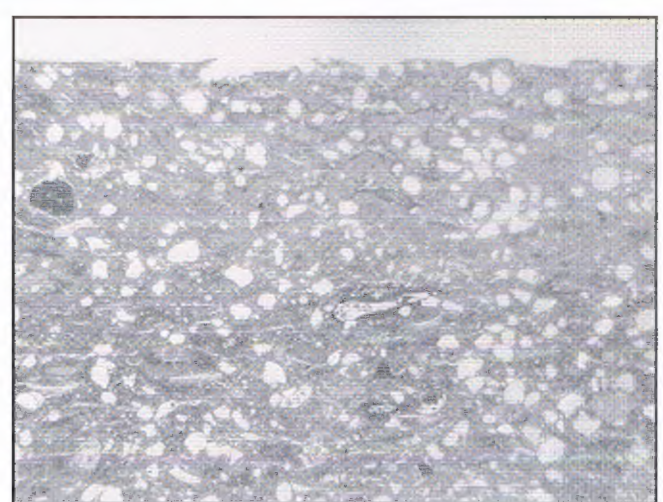
THE HANDLELESS LARGE SIZE JAR (FIG. 7-12).

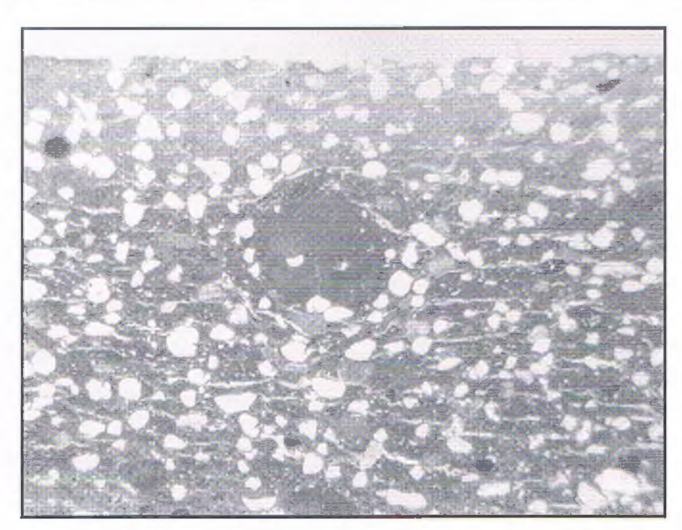
This handleless type is comparable in size (height ranges from 50 cm – 90 cm) and shape to the Canaanite jar, the major type of storage vessel employed in the Levant during Middle Bronze Age.
It is the most common type of jar. The absence of handles (Parr 1973, 174) does not indicate, as it does in Palestine, an early MBI stage. While jars with handles characterize all strata at Dan, handleless jars are present only in str. XII (MBI) (Ilan 1996, 221-222, fig.4.81); Gerstenblith (1983, 26), notes that handles only appear on storage jars in MBI phase 3 at Megiddo; at Aphek, Beck notes (1985, 199) that the handleless medium-sized storage jar that may have antecedents in inland Syria appeared at Aphek only during phases 1 and 2. Fine continuous wheel-combing is apparent on most vessels. One jar (fig. 9) (S/1853) with a rope pattern applied to the junction between neck and shoulder (Paley and Porat 1997, fig. 13. 6, Early Middle Bronze Age pottery at Tel el-Ifshar; Cohen 2002 fig. 2, 9 MBIIA) also has an incised T-shaped potter's mark made before firing (Bagh 2000, fig. 115 for comparisons with Beirut, Kharji, Megiddo and Tell el-Dab'a; however the mark here has much straighter lines then the rounder incisions of the above mentioned examples).

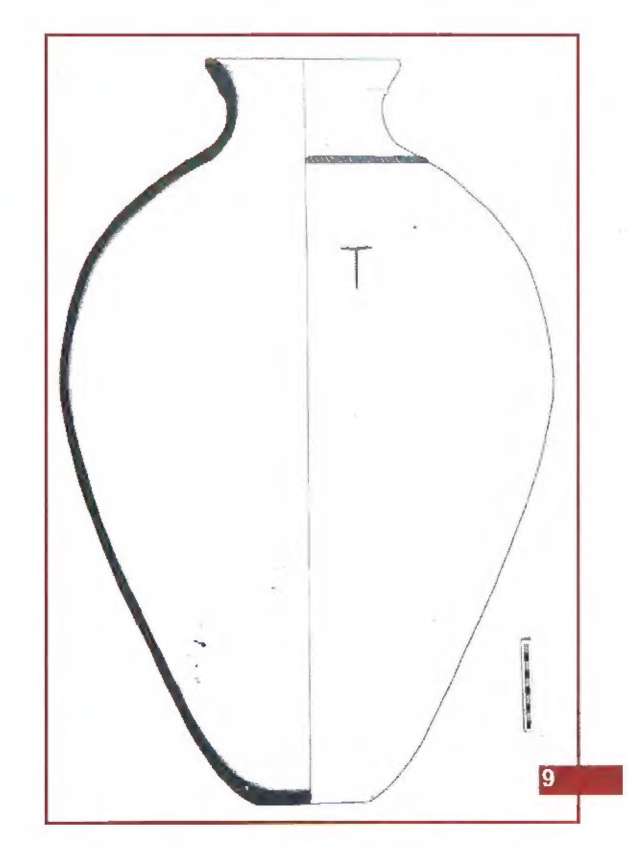


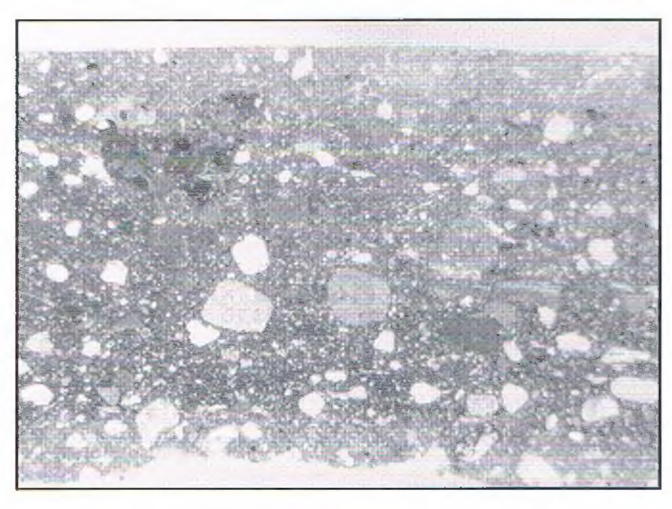

9 S/1853 burial 14

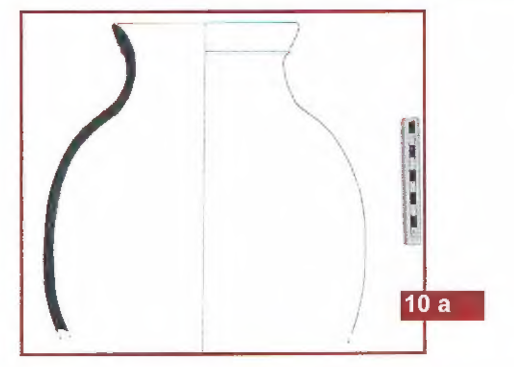

10 S/3056 burial 15
b
a

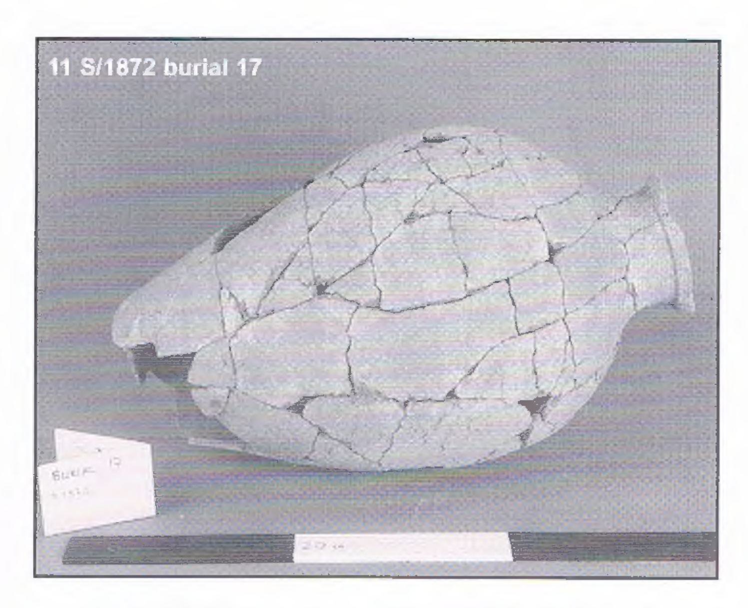


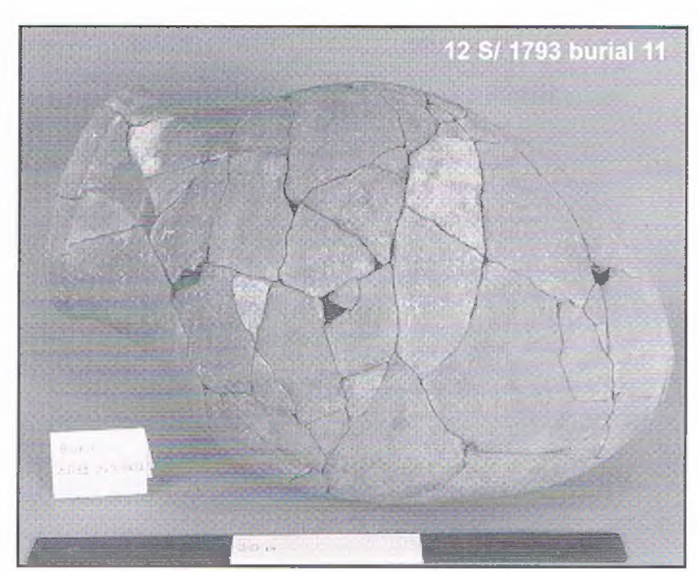


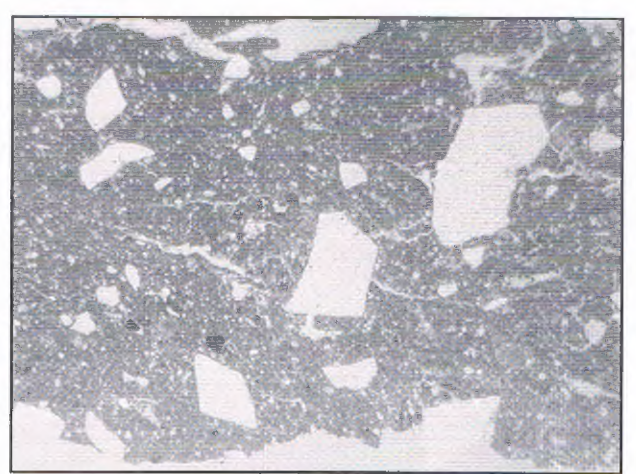

9

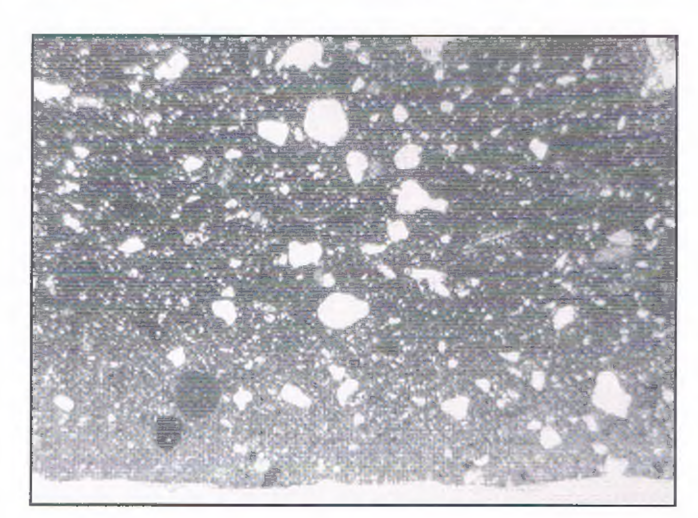


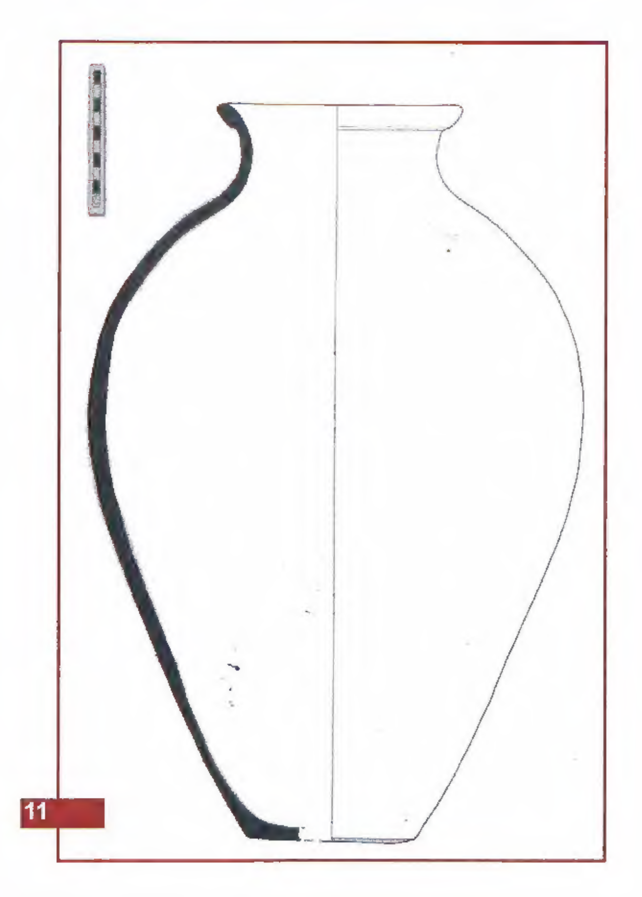

10 a

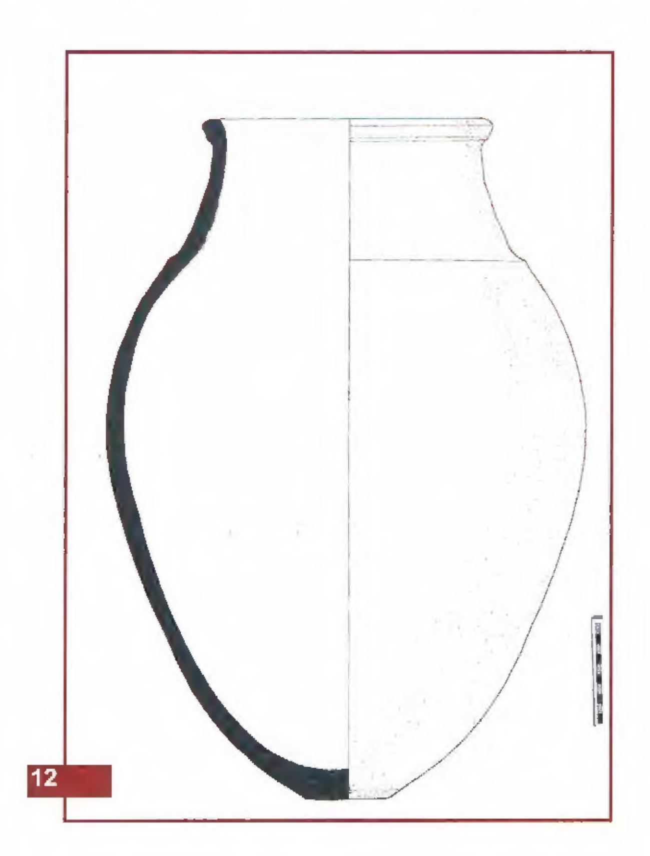

11 S/1872 burial 17


12 S/ 1793 burial 11






11


12

Rims with flaring necks have several variations, namely the simple (S/1853) (fig. 9) (Aston 2002, fig. 5, 4, p. 67 Tell el-Daba'a str. H=d/2) or double-ridged rim (S/ 3056) (fig. 10 a) (Beck 1975, 52, fig. 1, 14-15, (Pre-Palace phase) for comparisons with Ras el-Ain, Nahariya, Tel Poleg, Tell Beit Mirsim and Ruweise). The double-ridged rim is popular throughout MB IIB at Shechem (Cole 1965, 202) and continues in MB II C. Other styles include triangular-sectioned rim (S/1872) (fig. 11) (prevalent in the early phases at Aphek, Beck 1975, fig. 1; 6, 16; Cohen 2002 fig. 2. 3, MB IIA; Kochavi & Yadin 2002, fig. 32) and the thickened and grooved rim which tapers slightly (S/1793) (fig. 12) appear towards the end of MBII at Sidon (Aston 2002, fig. 9, 4 Tell el-Dab'a str. G/1-3=c). Flat and convex bases occur alongside each other (for comparisons see, Cole 1965, 178 and 185, MBII at Shechem; 186 in MBII).

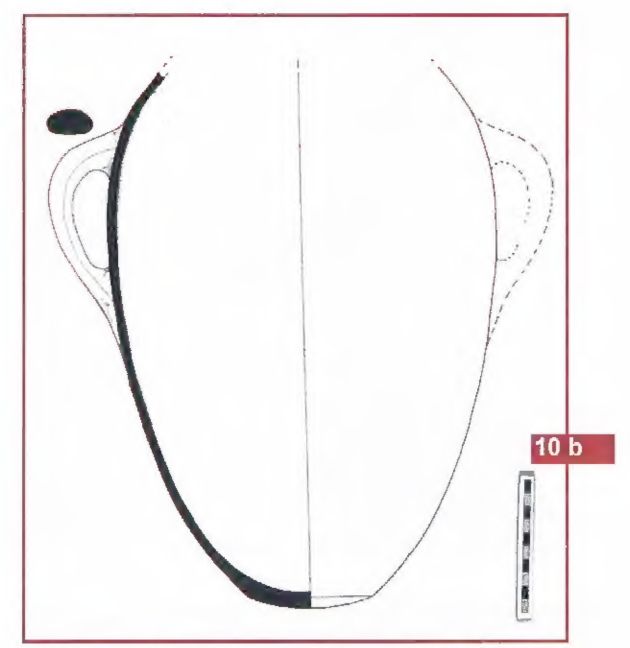
Jars with handles (fig. 10 b-13).

This is the classical Canaanite jar consisting of an ovoid-shaped jar with two handles, a rounded or slightly flattened base, a narrow mouth and a capacity of approximately 30 litres. This model was to become the liquid container and the export pottery vessel par excellence (McGovern and Harbottle 1997, 143). Only two oval-shaped vessels measuring 66 cm and 43.5 cm high were found at Sidon. The loop handles are attached below the shoulder.

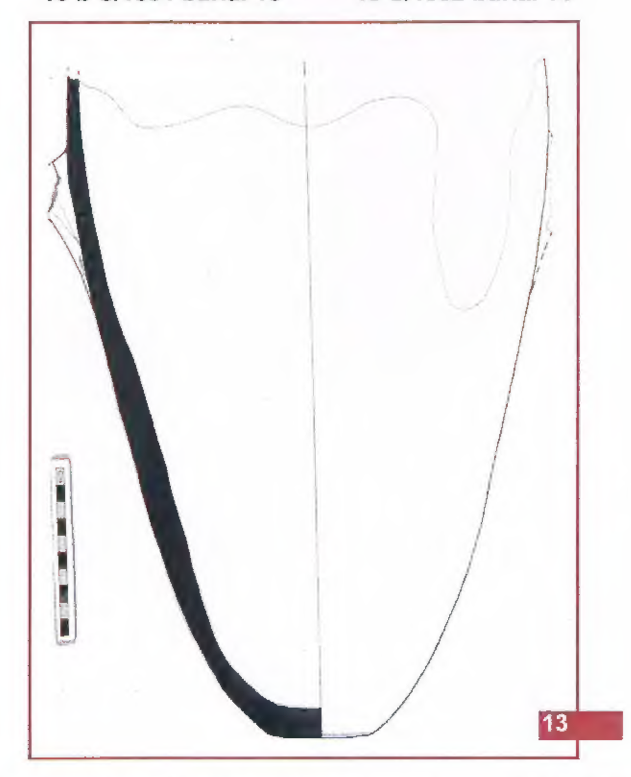
Jar S/1852 (fig. 13) served as the lid for another burial jar, a phenomenon encountered in contemporary contexts at Mishrife, (Du Mesnil du Buisson 1935, 153-155 coupole de Loth); Hazor (Yadin *et al.* 1960, 85, strata 4-3) and Dan (Ilan 1996; 172, T. 4356 (MBIIA)).

Regional variations and their implication

In conclusion (see also p. 38-41), the spouted hole-mouth jar (fig. 2) from the early MBI/1 at Sidon stresses some Early Bronze Age antecedents. Sidon's hole-mouth jars (fig. 5 & 6) are manufactured in the same way as the Montet jar. Dever underlines in an article published in 1992 the character of the Montet jar that "is a characteristically one-of-a-kind Byblian burial urn, not directly comparable to Palestinian MB I forms at all" (Dever 1992, 40). Comparisons with Sidon as well as Tell el-Ghassil (see p. 22) seem to suggest that this type of jar is characteristic of MBI in Lebanon. One vessel painted with Levantine Painted Ware (fig. 4) is typical of the MB I Palestinian repertoire. In MBII, shapes of rims and body as well as the incised potter's mark are very similar to Palestinian examples from the same period. The absence of handles is, however, a Sidonian particularity throughout MBI and II.



10 b S/1854 burial 15 13 S/1852 burial 14



Bibliography

R. Amiran,
1969, *Ancient Pottery of the Holy Land*, Jerusalem.
D. A. Aston,
2002, "Ceramic Imports at Tell el-Dab'a during the Middle Bronze II A", in M. Bietak (edit.), p. 43-87.
T. Bagh,
2000, *The Beginning of the Middle Bronze Age in Egypt and the Levant. A Study of the so-called Levantine Painted Ware and Related Painted Pottery Styles of the Beginning of the Middle Bronze Age, Focusing on Chronology*, Ph.D. Thesis, University of Copenhagen.
2000 a, "The Painted Vessels", in P. E. McGovern, p. 51-64.
P. Beck,
1975, "The Pottery of the Middle Bronze Age II A at Tel Aphek", *Tel Aviv*, 2. p. 45-85.
1985, "An Early Bronze Age "Family" of Bowls from Tel Aphek", *Tel Aviv*, 12, p. 17-28.
1985 a, "The Middle Bronze Age II A Pottery from Aphek, 1972-1984: First Summary", *Tel Aviv*, 12, p. 181-203.
M. Bietak,
2002, *Middle Bronze Age in the Levant, Proceedings of an International Conference on MBII A Ceramic Material, Vienna, 24th-26th of January 2001*, Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften Denkschriften der Gesamtakademie, Band XXVI, Wien.
I. Biran, D. Ilan, & R. Greenberg,
1996, *Dan I, A Chronicle of the Excavations, the Pottery Neolithic, the Early Bronze Age and the Middle Bronze Age Tombs*, Jerusalem.
S. Cohen,
2002, "Middle Bronze Age II A Ceramic Typology and Settlement in the Southern Levant", in M. Bietak (edit.), p. 113-131.
D. P. Cole,
1965, *Middle Bronze II B Pottery at Shechem: incorporating proposals for the Analysis and Reporting of Near Eastern Stratified Sherd Materials; a Dissertation submitted to the Division of Biblical Studies in the Graduate School of Drew University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy*, Madison, New Jersey.
W. G. Dever,
1992,"The Chronology of Syria-Palestine in the Second Millennium BC", *Ägypten und Levante*, III, p. 39-51.
C. Doumet-Serhal,
2001, "Third Season of Excavation at Sidon, Preliminary Report", *Bulletin d'Archéologie et d'Architecture Libanaises*, 5, p. 153-172.
"Sidon (Lebanon): Twenty Middle Bronze Age Burials from the 2001 Season of Excavation", forthcoming in *Levant*.
M. Dunand, N. Saliby, & A. Khirichian,
1954-55, "Les fouilles d'Amrith en 1954", *Annales Archéologiques Arabes Syriennes*, IV, V, p. 189-204.
P. Gerstenblith,
1980, "A Reassessment of the Beginning of the Middle Bronze Age in Syria-Palestine", *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, 237, p. 65- 84.
1983, *The Levant at the Beginning of the Middle Bronze Age*, American Schools of Oriental Research Dissertation Series, n° 5, Winona Lake.
R. Hachmann,
1969, "Le cimetière de l'âge du Bronze Moyen sur la pente nord du tell", *Bulletin du Musée de Beyrouth*, 22, p. 77-84.
1982, *Kamid el-Loz 1971-74*, Saarbrücker Beiträge Zur Altertumskunde 32, Bonn.
A. Hadidi,
1987, *Studies in the History and Archaeology of Jordan III*, Department of Antiquities, Amman, London and New York.
S. Helms,
1987, "A question of Economic Control during the Proto-Historical Era of Palestine/Transjordan (c. 3500-2000 BC)", p. 41-51, in A. Hadidi (edit.).
1989, "An EB IV Pottery Repertoire at Amman, Jordan", *BASOR*, 273, p. 17-36.
D. Ilan,
1996 a, "The Middle Bronze Age Tombs", in A. Biran, D. Ilan, & R. Greenberg, p. 163-267.
M. Kochavi & E. Yadin,
2002, "Typological Analysis of the MBII A Pottery from Aphek according to its Stratigraphic Provenance", in M. Bietak (edit.), p. 189-225.
M. Lebeau,
1997, *Subartu IV, 1, About Subartu, Studies devoted to Upper Mesopotamia*, European Centre for Upper Mesopotamian Studies, Brepols.
G. Loud,
1948, *Megiddo II. Seasons of 1935-1939*, Oriental Institute Publications 62, Chicago.
P. Montet,
1928, *Byblos et l'Egypte*, Paris.
P. E. McGovern,
1994, "The Archaeological Origin and Significance of the Dolphin Vase as Determined by Neutron Activation Analysis", *BASOR*, 296, p. 31-43.
2000, *The Foreign Relations of the "Hyksos". A neutron activation study of Middle Bronze Age Pottery from the Eastern Mediterranean*, Oxford.
P. E. McGovern & G. Harbottle,
1997, "Hyksos" Trade Connections between Tell el-Dab'a (Avaris) and the Levant: A Neutron Activation Study of the Canaanite Jar", in E. D. Oren, (edit.), p. 141-157.
P. Matthiae,
1977, *Ebla an Empire Rediscovered*, London.
1982, "The mature Early Syrian Culture of Ebla and the Development of Early Bronze Civilization of Jordan", *Studies in the History and Archaeology of Jordan I*, edited by Dr. Hadidi, A. Amman, p. 77-91.
P. Matthiae *et al.*,
2000, *Proceedings of the First International Congress on the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East, Rome, May 18th-23rd 1998*, Rome.
Du Mesnil du Buisson Comte,
1927, "Les ruines d'El-Mishrifé au nord-est de Homs (Emèse)", *Syria*, VIII, p. 13-33.
1930, "Compte rendu de la quatrième campagne de fouilles à Mishrifé-Qatna", *Syria*, 11, p. 148-163.
1932, "Une campagne de fouilles à Khan Sheikhoun", *Syria*, XIII, p. 171-188.
1935 a, *Le site archéologique de Mishrifé-Qatna*, Paris.
1935 b, "Souran et Tell Masin", *Berytus*, II, p. 121-134.
1948, *Baghgouz l'ancienne Corsôté*, Leiden .
L. Nigro,
1997, "Ebla and the Ceramic Provinces of Northern Syria in the Middle Bronze Age: Relationships and Interconnections with the Pottery Horizons of Upper Mesopotamia", in M. Lebeau, (edit.), p. 271-304.
2000, "Coordinating the MB I Pottery Horizon of Syria and Palestine", in P. Matthiae, *et al.*, p. 1187-1210.

A. Ogden, H. Schutkowski,
"Skeletal Report for the British Museum Sidon Excavation", forthcoming in *Levant*.
E. D. Oren,
1997, *The Hyksos: New Historical and Archaeological Perspectives*, Philadelphia.
P. J. Parr,
1973, "The Origin of the Canaanite Jar" in D. E. Strong, p. 173-181.
K. Prag,
1974, "The Intermediate Early Bronze-Middle Bronze Age: An Interpretation of the Evidence from Transjordan, Syria and Lebanon", *Levant*, VI, p. 69-116.
S. Richard,
1987, "The Early Bronze Age, the Rise and Collapse of Urbanism", *Biblical Archaeologist*, 50, 1, p. 22-43.
2000, "Chronology versus Regionalism in the Early Bronze IV: An Assemblage of Whole and Restored Vessels from the Public Building at Khirbet Iskander", in L. E. Stager, J. A. Greene, & M. D. Coogan, p. 399-417.
L. E. Stager, J. A. Greene, & M. D. Coogan,
2000, *The Archaeology of Jordan and Beyond, Essays in Honor of James A. Sauer, Studies in the Archaeology and History of the Levant*, Winona Lake.
D. E. Strong,
1973, *Archaeological Theory and Practice*, London & New York.
M. Tadmor,
1978, "A Cult Cave of the Middle Bronze Age I near Qadesh", *Israel Exploration Journal*, 1-2, n° 28, p. 1-30.
J.-P. Thalmann,
1991, "L'âge du Bronze à Tell Arqa, bilan et perspectives (1981-1991)", *Berytus*, XXXIX, p. 28- 32.
1993, *L'âge du Bronze à Tell Arqa*, Thèse de Doctorat de l'Université de Paris I, Paris.
2000, "Tell Arqa", *BAAL*, 4, p. 5-74.
J. Tubb,
1983, "The MBII A Period in Palestine: Its Relationship with Syria and its Origin", *Levant*, XV, p. 49-62.
O. Tufnell & W. A. Ward,
1966, "Relations between Byblos, Egypt and Mesopotamia at the end of the Third Millennium BC", *Syria*, XLIII, p. 165-241.
E. Vila,
"Survey of the Remains of Mammals Recovered in the Middle Bronze Age Burials at Sidon (Lebanon)", forthcoming in *Levant*.
Y. Yadin *et al.*,
1960, Hazor II, *An Account of the Second Season of Excavations 1957*, Jerusalem.